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ABSTRACT

This book takes a critical view of both the far right and far left positions concerning higher education, arguing that both sides aim to indoctrinate students in specific cultural and political dogmas and are in fact engaging in "politics by other means," whereas the purpose of genuine education should be to foster critical thinking and intellectual independence. The first chapter, "The New Fundamentalists" contains a selection of recent events to illustrate the problem. Chapter 2, "Moral Education in the Age of Reagan," reviews conservative issues and the historical foundations of American conservative thought. Chapter 3, "The Limits of Institutional Radicalism," examines the status of academic liberalism and its relation to traditions of higher education. Chapter 4 offers a defense of liberalism and the uses of tradition, a way of thinking that associates personal reflection with social morality and that sees both as modified by a tradition which can reform itself. Chapter 5 traces aspects of the recent evolution of literary study focusing particularly on the theoretical movement that laid the groundwork for recent group cultures. A concluding section notes the recent prominence of concerns about the status of these issues in higher education, and suggests that the state of the academy and the issues in politics are intimately connected. Includes an index and chapter notes. (JB)

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